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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/05/08

INDEX:

- (1) Editorial: How will Hillary Clinton carry out diplomacy?  
(Yomiuri)
- (2) Japan will urge U.S., China, Russia to sign cluster bomb ban:  
Kawamura (Mainichi)
- (3) Foreign minister plays up Japan's positive attitude for  
elimination of cluster bombs (Asahi)
- (4) Japanese, U.S. government officials meet with 14 base-hosting  
governors for meeting's sake (Okinawa Times)

ARTICLES:

- (1) Editorial: How will Hillary Clinton carry out diplomacy?

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Full)  
December 3, 2008

U.S. President-elect Barack Obama has announced his national security team. Obama named Sen. Hillary Clinton as secretary of state and retained Robert Gates in his current defense secretary post. Obama picked former Marine Corps General James Jones as national security adviser.

The new Obama administration will be inaugurated on Jan. 20. Obama's security and economic teams will have to produce tangible results in dealing with the global financial crisis, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as nuclear development in North Korea and Iran.

We think the appointments of Gates and Jones are pragmatic. Their selections probably are aimed at compensating for Obama's lack of experience in foreign policy and security affairs.

However, the question is that Obama gave a key post to Clinton, with whom he fiercely fought for the Democratic presidential nomination. During the primaries, Clinton blasted Obama as being naive for his willingness to seek dialogue with dictators without preconditions.

Obama looked confident in a press conference that he would be handing his powerful rival a key post. "I expect that there will be differences in tactics and different judgments. But I will make decisions," Obama said. It is questionable, however, if Obama and Clinton no longer have anything on their minds.

Under the administration of President George W. Bush, there have been run-ins in the State Department, the Defense Department and the White House over the war on terror. Such a situation should not be allowed to emerge again.

All eyes will be on what decisions the Obama administration will make and what actions it will take in its foreign and security policies. In this sense, Obama, Clinton and Gates must closely work for policy coordination.

The hard-line policy toward Japan taken by the Democratic administration that took power in the early 1990s is still fresh in our memories.

TOKYO 00003314 002 OF 004

The so-called Japan-passing peaked as the United States pressed Japan to eliminate U.S. trade deficits by meeting numerical targets.

The Japan-U.S. alliance was eventually strengthened as the two countries were confronted with such challenges as North Korea's nuclear development and tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Bill Clinton, the U.S. president during that time, and Hillary's husband, appeared to lean toward China. Bill Clinton's stance was called Japan-passing.

Hillary Clinton stated last year that the U.S. relationship with China will be the most important bilateral relationship in the world. If she puts greater emphasis on relations with China and plays down the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance, it could be problematic in many respects for stability in Asia.

Japan will need to constantly hold close consultations on foreign and security policies with the Obama administration in dealing with such issues as the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan and preventing nuclear development.

(2) Japan will urge U.S., China, Russia to sign cluster bomb ban:  
Kawamura

MAINICHI (Online) (Full)  
12:35, December 4, 2008

Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura, meeting the press today, underscored the significance of Japan's signing of the Cluster Bomb Ban Treaty. "Humanitarian consideration was given first," Kawamura said. "Japan was able to participate (in the signing of the treaty)," he added, "and I find it very significant." Kawamura also indicated that Japan would work on the United States and other nonsignatories to join the treaty. He said: "The United States, China, and Russia have yet to sign the treaty, so it's important to work together with all other (signatory) countries to call on these countries (to join the treaty). From the perspective of humanitarianism as well, the world is now in a tendency to abolish the cluster munitions."

(3) Foreign minister plays up Japan's positive attitude for elimination of cluster bombs

After signing the treaty banning cluster bombs (in Oslo on Dec. 3), Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone delivered a speech in which he said: "The use of weapons renewing people's hatred even after the end of conflicts must not be allowed." The statement was based on Japan's support for demining in areas near the Cambodia-Thailand border and his visits there. Nakasone also played up Japan's efforts, informing the conference of the Japanese government's assistance totaling 7 million dollars (approximately 700 million yen) for measures against cluster bombs.

Reversing its reluctance toward the Oslo process, Japan has decided to join the treaty based on former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's political decision in deference to public opinion. Despite strong objections from the Self-Defense Forces and others, Japan will abolish all four types of cluster bombs it possesses. The government

TOKYO 00003314 003 OF 004

will ask for the ratification of the treaty possibly in next year's regular Diet session. The cluster munitions must be abolished in eight years of the effectuation of the treaty. The Defense Ministry has produced a fiscal 2009 budgetary request for 200 million yen to study how to dispose of Japan's cluster bombs.

The problem cannot be resolved with the disposal of cluster munitions by Japan alone. Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono, who chairs an anti-cluster bomb parliamentary league, underlined in the league's general meeting last month the need to urge such countries as the United States and Russia to join the treaty. The reason is because non-signatory countries possess 70 PERCENT -90 PERCENT of the cluster munitions in the world. Prime Minister Taro Aso said last night: "I am going to work upon as many non-signatory countries as possible to join the treaty."

Japan has focused on regulating cluster munitions within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which includes the United States, China and Russia. It is important for Japan to work upon other countries at CCW meetings separate from the Oslo treaty.

It is also essential that bombs be abolished in a transparent manner. In many countries, the numbers of cluster bombs they possess are classified as military secrets. Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines member and Chuo University Professor Motoko Mekata took this view: "Japan must exhibit a positive posture by clarifying the budget and places for disposing of its cluster munitions."

(4) Japanese, U.S. government officials meet with 14 base-hosting governors for meeting's sake

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)  
December 4, 2008

(Commentary)

In the wake of a series of heinous crimes committed by U.S. military personnel this year, a liaison conference was held (yesterday) between the Japanese and U.S. governments and the governors of 14 prefectures hosting U.S. military bases at the request of the governors' association (headed by Kanagawa Gov. Shigefumi Matsuzawa).

The association's request stemmed from its strong distrust of the two governments, although Tokyo and Washington have made efforts to prevent similar incidents and accidents from recurring. The governors' association was motivated to have local views reflected directly in the efforts of Tokyo and Washington. Therefore, the association has called for setting the liaison conference under the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee, which works out official arrangements between the two countries.

However, the two governments deem it difficult to accept the request, explaining that the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) stipulates that the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee is made up of

representatives from the governments of Japan and the United States. The conference was eventually held at U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer's idea of holding a liaison conference as a "different channel" from the formal meetings of officials from the two governments.

TOKYO 00003314 004 OF 004

Immediately after a U.S. service member's fatal stabbing of a taxi driver in Kanagawa Prefecture, Gov. Matsuzawa stated:

"If they remain elusive about our request even though they say they will listen well to local residents, that's unacceptable. A conference should be something that will lead to the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee."

Matsuzawa emphasized the meaning of setting the conference under the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee.

However, in yesterday's meeting, Matsuzawa toned down, saying: "We will ask them to have our arguments reflected in the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee's discussions." It is undeniable that the liaison conference was held just for the sake of a meeting. The hour-long meeting ended up with greetings and briefings by representatives.

Even so, Matsuzawa spoke very highly of the conference. He said, "It was an epoch-making event in the history of the Japan-U.S. security alliance." However, the Foreign Ministry says the Japanese and U.S. governments still have no plans for the next meeting. It is also unclear how the two governments will handle more than 100 requests from the governors' association. There are many difficult issues in store.

In order for the association to have local views reflected for solutions to U.S. base issues, the government will have to work out clear-cut visions and make strategic efforts.

SCHIEFFER